



AOT in Action

TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Good afternoon.

Last week was a very successful week for the travel industry. The 15th Annual Travel Industry Association State of the Travel Industry Luncheon was held in Washington D.C. and as a member of the TIA Board of Directors I was present representing Arizona. During the luncheon, TIA's National Chair, Jay Rasulo, introduced a three-point plan, "The Blueprint for Change," outlining, for the first time in industry history, a comprehensive and coordinated marketing strategy for America as a premier travel destination. The blueprint was created under the direction of the Discover America Partnership, a newly formed business organization made up of several industry leaders whose focus is to improve America's image to international travelers and increase visitor numbers. The plan offers concrete proposals on how to repair America's visa policy, improve entry procedures and alter negative perceptions of the U.S. in other countries. This is a much needed initiative because in most countries, favorable opinions of America are far below 50 percent. In fact, according to a study commissioned by the Discover America Partnership, the U.S. is the number one choice from a list of 10 broadly-defined destinations when it comes to being the most unfriendly to international travelers.

TIA was also awarded a \$3.9 million grant by the Department of Commerce. The grant will be awarded over the next two years and will be used to develop the official travel Web site for the U.S. to help promote America to international travelers. Our industry has taken a major step forward with these initiatives and we are excited about working together with all organizations involved to establish both these plans.

To read "The Blueprint for Change," document in detail, please click [here](#).

Have a great week.



Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News Flash

AOT Releases 2007 Official State Visitor's Guide

AOT is set to release the 2007 Official State Visitor's Guide and Map (OSVG). In keeping with tradition of previous editions, the 2007 OSVG continues to be the best resource for visitors planning to come to the Grand Canyon State by offering information on Arizona state parks, hotel accommodations, golf courses, spas, events, family adventure opportunities and much more. The theme of this year's Guide is Inspiring Unforgettable Southwest Moments. AOT made several enhancements to the 2007 OSVG in order to accommodate for easier and more intuitive travel planning. The most significant upgrade is the Guide's new magazine format, which features first-hand stories written by travel writers about the many unique experiences visitors can find in Arizona. Another noteworthy change to the Guide is the addition of several themed sections to help capture the imaginations of potential and repeat visitors to Arizona. The themed sections feature information on statewide events, sightseeing opportunities, outdoor activities and culinary experiences. The Guide also offers tips on how to take the perfect photograph, such as the best angle or the best time of day, for some of Arizona's amazing scenery. There are also tips on what, where and how to buy items such as a Navajo blanket. The accompanying Map includes valuable travel and tourist information, including a detailed listing of campgrounds and recreational areas, information the state's Native American lands, a listing of Arizona's designated Scenic Roads and travel tips for each of the state's five regions. Content from the Guide is also available online at www.arizonaguide.com. To obtain a complimentary copy of the Official State Visitor's Guide, call the Arizona Office of Tourism at (866) 298-3312.

Teamwork for Effective Arizona Marketing (TEAM) FY 2008 Certification Workshops – SAVE the DATE

The Arizona Office of Tourism is pleased to present our FY 2008 Teamwork for Effective Arizona Marketing (TEAM) Certification workshops. TEAM workshops are designed to provide comprehensive information on AOT's matching grant program and the applications process. To further assist communities and organization with their tourism planning and development, this year's workshop will also include information on how to develop a marketing plan. AOT offers the opportunity to attend a workshop in one of five Arizona communities: Phoenix, Sierra Vista, Kingman, Flagstaff, and Show Low. Workshop attendance is mandatory for those organizations who wish to apply for matching grant funding for FY 2008. To RSVP for a workshop, please contact Sarah Martins at 602-364-3687 or via email at smartins@azot.gov. Please see below dates and locations, more information to follow.

Phoenix
Tuesday, February 13, 2007
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Sierra Vista
Thursday, February 15, 2007
1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Kingman
Tuesday, February 20, 2007
1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Flagstaff
Thursday, February 22, 2007
1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Show Low
Tuesday, February 27, 2007
12 p.m. – 2 p.m.

Trippin' with AOT

AOT Conducts Annual Trade Mission to Mexico

Each year AOT conducts an annual trade mission to “second tier” cities in Mexico. These cities are typically overlooked when compared to places like Guadalajara and Mexico City, but airline statistics show they are too important to ignore. This year’s trade mission was held January 22 – 26, 2007 and targeted Puebla, Queretaro and Leon. Breakfast seminars were conducted in each city for travel agents and tour operators with more than 165 people in attendance during the week. A small event was also held in Mexico City with ten key tour operators and Aeromexico representatives in attendance. The Arizona delegation included Mary Rittmann, AOT; Barbara Jackson, AOT’s representative in Mexico; Ashlee Ciora, Scottsdale CVB; Michael Martin, Tempe CVB; Ryan Monroe, Phoenix CVB and Kate Cavaliere, Westcor. If you have any questions or comments please contact Mary Rittmann at 602-364-3730 or mrtrittmann@azot.gov.

AOT in Dallas, Texas

On January 21, 2007, the Star-Telegram, a Ft. Worth daily newspaper coordinated their annual travel and cruise show targeting its readers who have a propensity to travel. US Airways Vacations participates in this show and offered its Arizona suppliers the opportunity to join them at the show as well as advertise in conjunction with them to promote the event. Kristy Swanson attended on AOT’s behalf. AOT was able to meet with more than 500 consumers and gave away an estimated 300 brochures. In addition to the show, US Airways hosted their annual Dallas area travel agent appreciation dinner in attendance were 50 of their top travel agents. AOT was also able to conduct post-show sales calls to the local AAA offices. For more information please contact Kristy Swanson at 602-364-3696 or via email at kswanson@azot.gov.

Industry News

Industry Rolls Out “Blueprint” to Grow Inbound Tourism

Travel industry representatives rolled out an ambitious, three-part plan designed to bolster inbound tourism by improving the government's visa issuance procedures, modernizing points of entry to the U.S. and creating a public-private partnership to promote the U.S. to travelers overseas. The plan, called "A Blueprint to Discover America," was released in Washington

Wednesday during a press conference before being unveiled later to an audience of travel industry executives and government leaders at the Travel Industry Association's annual State of the Industry Luncheon. Industry representatives also went to Capitol Hill to explain the plan during a hearing before the Senate subcommittee on interstate commerce, trade and tourism. Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-S.D., chairman of the subcommittee, expressed willingness to craft legislation based on the plan. (*Travel Weekly.com*; *Honolulu Advertiser.com* /Business; Page 3A, *Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel*; AP)

TIA to Build Official Travel & Tourism Website Promoting America

Encouraging international travelers to "Discover America," the Travel Industry Association (TIA) will build websites in multiple languages to promote the U.S. as a premier destination after winning a \$3.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce, it was announced today. TIA, with the assistance of leading travel industry partners, including several of the State Tourism Offices and Convention and Visitors Bureaus, American Express, Travelocity, Yahoo! and Fodor's, will build, market and maintain a set of websites aimed at markets that account for roughly 75 percent of the international inbound travel market. TIA initially will develop websites in English and Japanese over the next nine months to attract attention primarily from travelers in the United Kingdom, Canada and Japan. The second phase will include development of sites targeting residents of Mexico and Germany. TIA has retained Blue Canopy as technology integrator and Tribal DDB as lead agency to assist in the development and implementation of these sites. "As the organization that represents the interests of the entire U.S. travel industry, we're uniquely positioned to create world class websites that will provide relevant and meaningful information for travelers from key markets throughout the world," said Roger Dow, President and Chief Executive Officer at TIA. "We opted for a prudent, two-phase approach to ensure the project's success, and we're grateful for the confidence shown in our organization by everyone at the Department of Commerce." Dow noted the importance of reaching overseas travelers in particular because that portion of international inbound travel to the U.S. has declined by 17 percent since 9/11, and the U.S. share of the world travel market has declined by 36 percent since 1992.

WRTA to Represent \$18 Billion Worldwide Religious Travel Industry

Two of the most recognized faith-based travel industry authorities have launched the World Religious Travel Association (WRTA) to advise, build and connect the \$18 billion worldwide religious travel industry. Kevin J. Wright, President of the Religious Market Consulting Group, and Honnie Korngold, President of the Christian Travel Finder are the founders. They say they have established the organization in response to the growing demand for faith-based vacations and the increasing number of tourism companies entering or expanding their presence within the industry. "WRTA's overall mission is simple and clear: We will advise and assist the travel industry in working with the religious market, and establish faith-based vacations as a key travel option for the religious consumer," said Kevin J. Wright, Executive Director of WRTA. The association comes at a pivotal stage in the burgeoning faith-based travel industry that, according to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), is one of the fastest growing travel segments. Last November, the Travel Industry Association of America released survey findings that "one-quarter of travelers said they were currently interested in taking a spiritual vacation (religious retreat, pilgrimage), and that the appeal of a spiritual vacation spans the ages, with approximately one-third of age groups 18 to 55+ expressing current interest in taking such a vacation." Last October, the International Conference on Religious Tourism (ICORET), held in Cyprus, estimated the size of the faith-based travel industry at \$18 billion. In November 1998, the World Travel Market in

London released research that identified faith-based travel as one of the top critical issues and trends in travel and tourism in the 21st century. With an initial focus on the North American religious market and consumer, the WRTA association plans to expand throughout the world as emerging markets mature and consumer demand increases. The three major goals of the association are:

- Advise and assist the worldwide travel industry in marketing, selling and developing product for the North American religious market and consumer.
- Build faith-based vacation and travel ministry opportunities for North American religious consumers.
- Connect the worldwide travel industry and the North American religious consumer (via various channels, venues and networking opportunities).

WRTA says it will promote every aspect of religious travel including escorted touring, cruising, missionary travel, adventure trips, FIT/Independent travel, attractions, retreats, conferences, and conventions/meetings. WRTA also will launch the first-ever awards for the religious travel, tourism and hospitality industry. Winners will be announced in December, 2007 and will include categories such as "Tour Operator of the Year," "Travel Agent of the Year," "Religious Attraction of the Year," and "Religious Destination of the Year. *(Report by David Wilkening)*

TIA and Travel Market Insights Announce New Market Research Partnership

The Travel Industry Association and Travel Market Insights on Tuesday announced a new market research partnership that will provide what the groups say will be the best early indicator of British, German and Mexican bookings to the U.S., and an accurate short-term forecast of arrivals from these key markets. The groups say the partnership will better serve U.S. destinations and companies invested in the international travel market. The two will partner to conduct the TIA Travel Trade Barometer program in the U.K., Germany and Mexico. The most recent barometer projects that winter travel to the U.S. from the U.K. will decline 1 percent to 3 percent. German bookings this winter are projected to gain 1 percent to 3 percent, while winter bookings from Mexico to the U.S. are projected to be flat overall, although business travel is expected to grow slightly. *(Special to TA)*

Food for Thought: Tours Show a Growing Appetite

More Americans than ever are taking food-focused vacations, according to the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA). The TIA recently performed its first-ever study on wine and culinary travelers. The full report won't be released until February, but TIA says that two in five leisure travelers have participated in activities associated with culinary tourism. "Food-based travel, including culinary and wine tours, is currently one of the biggest trends in the travel industry. Travelers have become more food-savvy over the years and they're looking to expand their experience of a destination through its wine and food offerings," said Cathy Keefe, manager of media relations at TIA. In response, hotels are polishing up their food and wine packages, cooking schools and high-profile chefs to lure travelers. New tours are also being introduced. Remote Lands has just introduced what the company says is the first-ever private jet culinary tour. The trip will include two weeks in Thailand, Burma, Bhutan, India and China, traveling by plane and escorted by food critics. The group will dine with members of the Thai royal family, experience private cooking demonstrations and visit local markets where everything from fried grasshoppers to barbecued goat head is for sale. The cost: \$49,950 per person. *(Report by David Wilkening)*

